

Hegel on Schleiermacher and Postmodernity

Jeffrey Reid

Abstract

Hegel's critique of Schleiermacher involves Hegel's attempt to resolve, through an historical account, what was a deeply felt and determining dilemma of the time: how to reconcile Enlightenment reason with dogmatic faith. This account sees Schleiermacher's theology of feeling as the contemporary, dangerous manifestation of both currents, in their unreconciled, non-systematic and indeed, anti-systematic forms. Hegel's grasp of this contemporary culture of feeling, with its contradictory roots in empiricism and skepticism, can be understood as a critique of the postmodern world, as it is portrayed in writers such as F. Lyotard, J. Baudrillard and G. Lipovetsky.

The contretemps between Hegel and Schleiermacher at the University of Berlin is well known.¹ The nature of their struggle for influence, the latter's refusal to admit the former into the Berlin Academy and Hegel's reciprocal distancing of Schleiermacher from his critical *Annals* have been well documented and explored. In fact, Hegel's antipathy towards Schleiermacher stems from the latter's early association with Friedrich Schlegel, whom he defended in his "anonymous" letter in support of the "scandalous" novel *Lucinde*, in 1800. Schlegel's novel, which seemed an apology for free love, the ambivalence of male and female sexual roles and a blending of literature and philosophy, could not but offend Hegel's sense of propriety, both with regard to his belief in the institution of marriage and his Platonic promotion of philosophy as science over poetry. Pastor Schleiermacher's defence of Schlegel's apparently loose sexual mores seems to have struck Hegel in a visceral way, as hypocritical, which explains the parson's inclusion in the long addition to paragraph 140 of the *Philosophy of Right* where hypocrisy, through "probabilism", is linked to romantic irony and Schlegel.² In this light, it is not surprising to see Schleiermacher appear as the

"Tartuffe"³ in the same passage. The fact it was written some twenty years after the Jena period, reveals the depth of feeling underlying Hegel's antipathy.

What concerns me here is how Schleiermacher's theology of feeling came to represent, for Hegel, an exemplary expression of contemporary malaise that is presented as the manifest culmination of the history of Christianity. This is interesting for several reasons. First, the actual (*wirklich*) character that Hegel attributes to Schleiermacher's theology of feeling shows us how Hegel comes to understand it in terms of a worldly, historical development. This approach allows him to overcome genealogically what was initially a deeply-felt theoretical dilemma between the enlightened and dogmatic views of Christianity. Second, the contemporary nature of the malaise represented in his rival's theology shows that, far from seeing the world around him as the comforting realization of his own system, Hegel feels the presence of something new, something inimical to the world of Science.⁴ Third, insofar as we may recognize in Hegel's description of contemporary malaise something of our own condition and to the extent we understand our époque as postmodern, we can take his critique of Schleiermacher as telling us something about ourselves. I believe this is indeed the case and that Hegel has something new to say about the postmodern condition.

Hegel seems to have discovered the symptoms of malaise retrospectively, in the parson's influential *Speeches on Religion*, and particularly in the undiluted first edition of the work (1799), where Schleiermacher's "theology of feeling/intuition" is initially articulated.⁵ I say "retrospectively" because Hegel's early take on the theologian's *Speeches* is far more positive than the polemical critique we find during the Berlin period, for example, in the *Philosophy of Right* (1820) and in Hegel's *Preface* to Hinrichs' work on religion (1822).⁶ This preface is particularly

important, since it represents one clear instance where Hegel's thoughts on religion are not confined to his published lectures. He actually *wrote* the Preface.

The Preface represents Hegel's ultimate pronouncement on his rival and brings to light the first aspect of interest I mentioned above: how Hegel comes to resolve a deeply felt contradiction between dogmatic faith and the reasonable religion of the Enlightenment, what was called "natural religion" at the time, through the dialectical movement of the history of Christianity. It is only in the light of this historical movement that we can understand, by contrast, how Schleiermacher's religion of feeling stands in opposition to such a movement, i.e. as the static, unresolved expression of the contradiction between faith and reason, where the movement stalls without realizing integration into the wholeness of Hegelian Science. Before looking at the Preface, however, it is necessary to see how Hegel's grasp of his Berlin rival evolved in light of his own attempts to reconcile this fundamental contradiction.

We can trace the origins of Hegel's dilemma between dogmatic faith and Enlightenment religion back to his college days at Tübingen in the late 1780's, where he was caught up between two very distinct currents of theological debate. In one corner stood Professor of Theology, Gottlob Storr, proponent of orthodox faith and the unquestioning acceptance of religious truth as divine Revelation. Opposite, we have the incendiary, young Immanuel Diez, leader of the Tübingen "Kant-Klub" that included Schelling and Hölderlin, but not Hegel. Diez represented an extreme Enlightenment view of Christianity, so radical it dispensed with the divinity of Revelation and Christ altogether. Curiously, both Storr and Diez based their opposing doctrines on equally opposing interpretations of Kant. For Storr, the impossibility of noumenal knowledge simply proved that extrasensory truth must be conveyed by divine Revelation and grasped directly through faith.

Diez argued that the impossibility of knowing the thing-in-itself simply showed that Revelation itself, falling beyond sensual intuition, was impossible to know and thus best forgotten. As Kant had “shown” in his second Critique, free reason, postulating its own principles, was a sufficient basis for determining the Good.⁷

That Hegel was torn between these two viewpoints, is evident in his subsequent writings on Christianity, in Berne and Frankfurt. First he embraces the *Aufklärung* view of natural religion, in his essay “The Life of Jesus”, where Christ is seen as a moral teacher, a kind of archetypal embodiment of Kant’s moral philosophy or *Postulatlehre*. Then, Hegel essays the more orthodox route, in his “Spirit of Christianity”, where Christ is the perfect instance of divine Revelation, where dogma is sacred. Ultimately, the reconciliation of these two unilateral positions, to use Hegel’s language, only happens within systematic (Hegelian) philosophy, in other words, where religion becomes philosophy of religion, and philosophy becomes absolute knowing. The first attempt at this reconciliation between faith and knowing is attempted in 1802, specifically in the published work of that title: *Glauben und Wissen*. Here, the “synthesis” is largely understood in terms of an intellectual intuition, an immediate seizing of the *absolute* unity, i.e. the one that includes both intuitive identity and conceptual differentiation. I believe one could argue, although I won’t do it here, that the *Phenomenology*, and the final system of the *Encyclopedia* embrace, in different ways, the same project, namely how to reconcile the intuitive, felt content of faith with the demands of knowing.

Just as Hegel sees philosophical *logos* as reconciling this conflict, he sees Schleiermacher’s theology as an aborted state of affairs, where the two poles become fixated in their opposition. Such a fixation must therefore also represent, for Hegel, an opposing *logos* to that of philosophical

science. To the extent that philosophical science (his own) was meant to embody objective truth and enjoy a certain actuality, in that it was professed at the University of Berlin, Schleiermacher's theology could only represent a reality that stood in opposition to the world of Hegelian *Wissenschaft*. This is ultimately how Schleiermacher comes to represent, for Hegel, a generalized malaise. Hegel's judgment of Schleiermacher evolves according to the dynamic interplay in his own mind between the poles of faith and reason, or rather, in this context, between intuition and understanding. In fact, Schleiermacher's progressive fall from Hegelian grace reflects the progression of Hegel's own take on intuition, from his early espousal of Schelling's vision of intellectual intuition, to his later reading of intuition as essentially subjective feeling.

An early judgement on the *Speeches* can be found in Hegel's article on "The Difference Between the Systems of Fichte and Schelling" (1801). In this context, with Hegel himself still very much under the influence of the latter, Schleiermacher's publication is welcomed, with some reservations, as sharing a common speculative project: the synthesis of reflective understanding and (particular) intuition within an intellectual (universal) intuition. Schleiermacher's "intuition of the Universe" is seen as seeking to redress the injustice Kant and Fichte perpetrate on nature,⁸ where nature is deprived of any essential substance and where objectivity is no more than a subjective phenomenon. What Schleiermacher clearly promotes in the *Speeches* as an individual, subjective feeling of the universe as God,⁹ Hegel interprets in terms of his and Schelling's systematic project. Rejecting this alien interpretation may account for the fact that, in subsequent editions of his work, Schleiermacher largely replaces the term "intuition" with "feeling". Ironically, in doing so, he mirrors the progression of Hegel's own thought as I just described it, away from an attachment to intellectual intuition, towards an understanding of it as purely subjective and hence arbitrary feeling.

This is how Schleiermacher, who initially is taken for a fellow proponent of intellectual intuition, will later be characterized as the "theologian of feeling."¹⁰

Already one year later, in *Glauben und Wissen*, Hegel somewhat revises his earlier positive appraisal of the *Speeches*. Here, Schleiermacher is distinguished from Jacobi who is understood, with regard to objectivity, in Kantian or Fichtean terms: essence (the thing-in-itself) has been divorced from objectivity and sent "beyond", where it is the object of yearning (*Sehnsucht* or *Streben*). "On the other hand, in the *Speeches*," writes Hegel, "nature, as a collection of finite realities [*Wirklichkeiten*] recognized as the Universe, is destroyed [and] the infinite effort [*Streben*] is satisfied in intuition."¹¹

Whereas in the earlier writing, Schleiermacher's intuition of the universe "appeased" nature, now it is seen as destroying it. Hegel has come to see universal intuition in terms of a pantheism where the universal is present in everything. This puts an end to the painful yearning toward an other-worldly essence; however, this is at the expense of true objectivity, which loses its particular reality and becomes absorbed in a melting pot of pure sentiment. A universal intuition of everything as absolute essence cannot but do away with things in their particular individuality. What is missing in pure intuition is its polar opposite: reflexive understanding, which alone makes the particular distinctions necessary for the understanding of "finite realities."

Several conclusions can be drawn from this summary look at Hegel's early writings on Schleiermacher. First, it is noteworthy that neither passage can be described as polemical. Even though in *Faith and Knowing* universal intuition is accused of destroying nature, it nonetheless puts an end to the condition of romantic yearning.

Second, Hegel's views are centred around Schleiermacher's relation to objectivity. In the

earlier passage, intuition is seen as saving nature from the mistreatment it undergoes at the hands of reflexive understanding. Then, intuition seems to turn on objectivity and abolish it. In other words, when reflexive understanding mistreats objectivity, intuition saves it, and when intuition destroys objectivity, only reflexive understanding can rescue it. The conclusion to this apparent contradiction is simply that the unilaterality of either moment is pernicious to objectivity, and without a mediating middle term, consciousness oscillates endlessly from one extreme to the other.

Third, it should be noted that up to this point Hegel considers Schleiermacher himself solely in terms of intuition or feeling. Reflexive understanding is remarkable in its absence. As we will see, only later, in the Preface, does this moment come to be ascribed to his Berlin rival, through an historical movement that is meant to show how the theology of feeling comes about. This movement therefore involves an important, new distinction. Dogmatic faith comes to be seen as an historical expression of (dogmatic) understanding and not of intuition. As we will see, this frees feeling from faith, giving the former a life of its own.

As a final remark, before looking at the Preface, we should also note that the objectivity in question in both of the passages we just looked at is presented in an ambiguous fashion: as both purely natural phenomena devoid of essence (which understanding has relegated to the "beyond" as the thing-in-itself) and as something essential that must be preserved. Indeed, reading the two passages in question, we cannot help but feel Hegel's struggle. On one hand, we find that objectivity must exist as something substantial and essential, otherwise its mistreatment and destruction at the hands of universal intuition would be of no concern. On the other hand, when objectivity is preserved by reflexive understanding, it is no longer essential, since reflexive understanding can do no more than apprehend objectivity as a subjective phenomenon, divorced of

its true essence. There is a fundamental ambiguity involved in these positions, which I believe is only resolved with Hegel's subsequent grasp of objectivity as Spirit and ultimately as scientific *logos*. Without this *elenchus*, however, the objective world is sapped of its truth, both by understanding (or reason or knowing) acting alone, and by intuition acting alone. It is this state of affairs that Schleiermacher comes to represent.

In his Preface to Hinrichs's work on religion, Hegel puts forward a genealogy of the contemporary condition, in which the paradigmatic or symptomatic figure of Schleiermacher appears, along with his "religion of feeling". This genealogical approach to Schleiermacher's position supports my argument that, far from perceiving this figure as an individual peculiarity, Hegel sees it as an actual, contemporary condition of malaise, at odds with his own conception of scientific objectivity as the *logos* of the Idea. The protagonist in this story is thought itself, or rather what Hegel calls reflexive thought, the thought of subjective understanding (*Verstand*). It should now come as no surprise that the "antagonist" in this story is dogmatic, religious faith. What is surprising is that, as I mentioned above, dogmatic faith is now historically presented as a form of dogmatic understanding rather than as an expression of intuition. This is why, in the Preface, the agency of reflexive thought is first presented in the religious context of the pre-renaissance world, where ratiocinating understanding is under the sway of religious faith and entirely taken up with the casuistic concerns of Church scholarship. In this context, understanding finds absolute truth in the objects of faith, in the immediate and finite objectivity presented as "the stories, events, circumstances and commandments"¹² of positive religion. The truth of these things (*Dingen*) is imposed dogmatically. In fact, this "holding-for-true" (*Fürwahrhalten*) of finite things that is characteristic of Scholastic understanding is structurally identical to the dogmatic empiricism Hegel

ascribes to Jacobi, empirical certainty grounded in religious faith. The truth of what I perceive is guaranteed by my faith in God.

It is significant that the "finite things" Hegel is dealing with here are of a textual nature; he refers to "stories, events, circumstances and commandments" that are recounted or written. In other words, reflexive understanding does not necessarily involve direct perception of objectivity. It can operate through a dogmatic language of predication where words have the same stature as merely natural things. This is the language of "sterile erudition and orthodoxy,"¹³ where dogmatic understanding expresses itself in "letters" (*Buchstaben*), in an "external, historical account" (*äusserliche Historische*), in order to have the "last word" (*Hauptwort*) on divine truth.¹⁴ So here, Hegel presents the unilateral position of dogmatic faith as a certain historical moment of thought, that of Late Medieval Scholasticism, where the data of Revelation must be accepted as true, leaving thought the job of "sterile erudition and orthodoxy". This position might also reflect, to a certain extent, the orthodox theology of Hegel's old Tübingen professor, Gottlob Storr.

Dogmatic, orthodox religion, however, is the architect of its own demise. By allowing understanding to promote itself through theological erudition, for example as arbitrator on the veracity of Biblical accounts, the "infinite energy"¹⁵ of pure thought, which is inherent in reflexive thought, is liberated. In fact, in Hegelian terms, pure thought is synonymous with abstract freedom, the negativity powering dialectical movement, or the systematic (scientific) scepticism that thought brings to fixed, sclerotic positions, dissolving them into movement.¹⁶ In this way, reflexive understanding turns on itself, or rather on its own dogmatic and orthodox approach to finite objectivity. Historically, the power of thought promoted in Scholasticism unleashes itself in the Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*). Hegel presents this as a kind of bacchanal of free thinking, where

thought turns against its own hitherto held dogmatic positions.

In religious terms, this means the "histories", "commandments" etc. are simply not believed any more. The words recounting them are emptied of all significance or essence. Biblical texts are no longer sacred, but rather are treated hermeneutically, as a system of linguistic signifiers. In fact, Biblical texts share the fate of "mistreated" nature as I invoked it above: they become the phenomena of subjective idealism à la Kant and Fichte; they are mere appearances (*Scheine*). Regarding objectivity, the shift from dogmatic Christianity to the *Aufklärung* mirrors what might be thought of as a passage from dogmatic empiricism, as expressed in Jacobi, to Kantian empiricism. Both expressions remain those of reflexive understanding, although the former, by an act of faith, places essence in finite, natural reality, whereas the latter relegates essence to the great noumenal beyond.

According to this new way of looking at things, the data of Revelation and worldly objectivity, in general, consist of subjectively formulated appearances; essence, or truth, is now an unattainable (through *understanding*) thing-in-itself. The radical scepticism I mentioned above, which always haunts reflexive understanding and accounts for its restlessness, is expressed, in Kantian empiricism, in the assertion that the truth, as the thing-in-itself, cannot be *known*. This clears the way for the sort of radical enlightenment posture espoused by the other emblematic figure of Hegel's Tübingen days, I. Diez, who had once argued that even the Apostles could have no real *knowledge* of Christ's divinity, since such a knowledge would not be empirical.

That the truth cannot be *known* means it cannot be attained by reflexive understanding. It can only be, as Kant asserted, the object of faith, which, in the present context, means subjective intuition or feeling. Schleiermacher's religion of feeling appears precisely in this light, as the

corollary to his hermeneutical approach to religious doctrine and to the facts of Revelation. Reflexive understanding grasps objectivity, including text itself, as a swarm of finite, natural things that are the phenomena (*Scheine*) of subjective thinking.¹⁷ This objectivity is inessential. Things are no more than arbitrary signifiers or "names", emptied of all inherent significance. What this means is that essence or truth, as beyond understanding, can only be the object of *feeling*. To use Hegel's words, theology is "reduced to historical [i.e. hermeneutical] erudition and then to the deficient exposition of certain subjective feelings."¹⁸ Thus, "feeling is the sole mode in which religion can be present."¹⁹ This is how Schleiermacher is presented in the Preface, as one of those "ratiocinating theologians [...] who set religion in subjective feelings."²⁰ As such, he appears as a "contemporary representation (*Zeitvorstellung*)" of "the culture in our time."²¹

Hegel sees this culture as a condition of malaise, a condition where unilateral positions are sclerotically fixed and therefore impediments to the life or movement of thought and ultimately to the holistic conception of Spirit. This condition of malaise is manifest in what Hegel refers to as the three "absolute presuppositions" or "truths" of "our time,"²² all of which are represented in Schleiermacher's theology.

The first contemporary presupposition is the sceptical assertion that "man knows nothing of the truth."²³ As we have seen, this attitude is deduced from the empiricism of Kantian critical philosophy which "has presented to understanding the correct consciousness of itself: that it is incapable of knowing the truth."²⁴ This modern sceptical attitude is the one we saw arise in the Enlightenment, the bacchanal of doubt that was historically responsible for overturning and emptying the data of Revelation of their truth.

This attitude leads directly to the second universal presupposition of our times, "that spirit

[...] can only deal with appearances and finite things."²⁵ In other words, generalized scepticism has collapsed into generalized empiricism, as we saw it historically come on the scene with the Enlightenment. Following Hume and Kant, objectivity is now necessarily empirical, consisting of *inherently* meaningless, that is to say, subjectively determined phenomena.

Out of these empirical and sceptical attitudes towards truth arises the third "universal prejudice" of our time, "the opinion that feeling constitutes the veritable and even sole form in which religiosity conserves its authenticity."²⁶ Schleiermacher's theology of feeling is thus explained as the natural outcome of attendant positions of empiricism and scepticism. In other words, Schleiermacher's theology is symptomatic of a modern condition where objectivity has been reduced to empirical, subjectively determinable sense data, where scepticism is generalized and where feeling is seen as the only way to experience a truth that is necessarily grasped as "out there". Needless to say, this contemporary condition is not the one traditionally associated with Hegel's supposed "end of history," and indeed helps explode the myth that the philosopher believed this had come about, in Berlin, around the time he moved there.

The contradiction that Hegel had first experienced powerfully in his youth, between dogmatic faith and enlightened understanding, is therefore presented as two moments in the history of thought. These two positions are meant to be reconciled in Hegel's encyclopedic system, where, in "Absolute Spirit", the true objectivity of philosophy is expressed as the overcoming and suspending of art and religion. However, Schleiermacher, who of course refuses this Hegelian speculative reconciliation, comes to represent the same two moments fixed in their unresolved, unilateral opposition. Similarly, since Hegel uses Schleiermacher to represent this refusal of reconciliation, we may also understand the generalized, contemporary malaise he represents in

terms of a refusal of speculative reconciliation. In Berlin, toward the premature end of his life, Hegel came to see himself as living in a culture that was inimical to his holistic, reconciling vision of science. He presents this contemporary condition as a culture of fixed, unreconciled positions of empiricism, scepticism and feeling.

I now want to return to the question I addressed at the beginning of this paper. Is there anything in Hegel's description of contemporary malaise that reflects our own postmodern condition, and if so, does Hegel's reading tell us anything new? I will address this double-barrelled question, briefly, in two parts.

First, in order to see if we can recognize something of our own postmodern condition in the "three absolute presuppositions" of Hegel's contemporary world, I will refer to those authors who seem to have best defined our condition, beginning with a pioneer in this area, Jean-François Lyotard. I choose Lyotard not only because of the ground-breaking nature of *La condition postmoderne*, and its undeniable pertinence, but because the framework of his investigations is identical to that of Hegel: forms of knowing as expressions of an historical, cultural moment which Lyotard calls postmodern. Moreover, the French philosopher actually refers to Hegel's systematic philosophy as abrogated by a crucial postmodern tendency, one that echoes Hegel's own "postmodern" diagnostic.

In his chapter "La délégitimation",²⁷ Lyotard evokes precisely the overarching skepticism that Hegel expresses as the first universal presupposition, "nothing is true". Lyotard presents this generalized skepticism as the end of the "great narratives" of progress and science, particularly as these are embodied in Hegel's systematic philosophy. In fact, Lyotard explains the eclipse of such great narratives in Nietzschean terms, by saying these discourses carried the germs of nihilism

within themselves and more or less self-destructed by turning onto themselves their own extravagant demands for truth criteria. Regardless of the cause ascribed to the skepticism that brings about the end of the great narratives, this breakdown ushers in a type of postmodern knowledge that echoes the second of Hegel's universal presuppositions "of the times": spirit can only know finite things.

Lyotard expresses this knowledge of the finite as an "éclatement", a dispersal into a multitude of empirical sub-sciences, a particularization or "parceling" of scientific domains according to their finite objects. This parceling is accompanied by the breakdown of scientific discourse into ever smaller units, finally reaching "languages-machines" or "bits" of information. In fact, it is with this "hegemony of computer science"²⁸ and the transformation of knowledge into "quantities of information" that Lyotard begins his report on postmodern "knowing", contrasting the traditional idea of knowledge acquisition as "*Bildung* of spirit and even the person" with the postmodern notion of information as a product for consumption.

I don't have the space, here, to develop this "consumer" aspect back to Hegel's affirmation about knowledge dealing with only finite things. Perhaps it is enough to recall that the form of knowing he describes as "natural consciousness" is very much an individual consumer of the "world" in the form of finite sense phenomena.²⁹ What is pertinent to my argument is the fact that Lyotard describes the postmodern condition of science as Hegel describes the spirit of his own époque: the skeptical breakdown of systematic truth fractures and disperses in finite forms and objects of knowledge. This is particularly important because for Hegel (and I believe for Lyotard) objectivity only *is* as the object of knowledge. When the systematic objectivity of the great narratives breaks down, all that is left is the "bad infinity" of individual, finite things (*Dingen*). For

both philosophers, these finite things are the potential objects of knowledge/consumption.

This view of fractured, dispersed objectivity and its consumption, whether as information or as actual objects, is present in other important portrayals of the postmodern condition. Jean Baudrillard eloquently expresses the *éclatement* or dispersal underlying the *Société de consommation* as a loss of transcendence. “In the specific mode of consumerism, there is no more transcendence [...] there is only the immanence in the order of signs [...] there is logical calculus of signs and absorption into the system of signs [...]”³⁰ For Gilles Lipovetsky, “postmodern society no longer has [...] a mobilizing historical project [;] now we are governed by emptiness [...]”³¹ This is the emptiness of generalized consumerism, of constant hunger for more “objects or information.”³² The same logic can be found in Hannah Arendt, where we find that the great narrative of “hope that inspired Marx” has broken down to show the “fallacy of this reasoning; the spare time of the *animal laborans* is never spent in anything but consumption, and the more time left to him, the greedier and the more craving his appetites”.³³ If I were asked to find additional testimonials, I might also mention Michel Foucault’s “analytic of finitude” and the end of metaphysics.³⁴

What I believe all these accounts have in common is the movement we find in Hegel’s description of his “present age”: overarching skepticism has caused the disintegration of systematic objectivity, whether this is understood as the system of science or its objective contents, namely the Philosophy of Nature, the State, History, Art and Religion. Knowledge, or what Hegel calls the negativity of thought, can now only understand (*verstehen*) or consume the bad infinity of finite remains.³⁵ As I mentioned above, this plays significantly on how we grasp our philosopher, not as the satisfied herald of the end of history, but as the anxious observer of something new and

antagonistic to his notion of *Wissenschaft*. Beyond this scholarly significance, however, Hegel's perceptive and prescient account may actually tell us something new about the postmodern condition we live in. I find this insight in his third "universal presupposition of our time": the only way to the truth is through feeling.

The only account of postmodernity I have found that refers to something like this is Charles Taylor's reference to our contemporary desire for authenticity. Taylor even juxtaposes this search for inwardness with the pervasive aspect of selfish individualism, whose instrumental reason supposes the same fractured, consumable objectivity common to the other accounts of the postmodern condition I mentioned above.³⁶ Taylor's idea of authenticity, as an inward-directed search for truth, certainly does not contradict Hegel's third universal presupposition of the age, but I think the idea of feeling has a broader interpretive field and in this sense, it is even more fruitful.

Uncovering the expressions of feeling in the postmodern world would itself be an encyclopedic undertaking. It would involve looking at such phenomena as the contemporary explosion of religious forms, not in terms of the fracturing and dispersal of the larger religions, but in terms of the reliance on individual feeling rather than on dogma that seems typical of the new religious forms. It would involve analyzing the growth of New Age superstitions and their eschewal of reason and science. Such an investigation might also look into certain ecological expressions, into popular psychologies and self-help techniques. It might enquire into the contemporary willingness to embrace references to "God" within political, patriotic discourse, divorced from any appeal to organized religion and its doctrines.

However, even without embarking on such an enterprise, we can still derive contemporary relevance from Hegel's idea of feeling as the third universal presupposition of the times. The idea is

simple and insightful. The expressions of “feeling” that are so present in our world should be seen as an integral part of what constitutes postmodernity. Reliance on feeling is not a reaction against the contemporary expressions of individualization we readily observe in both the subjects and the objects of knowledge/consumption. Rather, the contemporary culture of feeling is the direct consequence of this sister culture. The skeptical breakdown of the great narrative structures that typified modernity brings about a condition where instrumental reason can only tell us about finite things. Any project for truth in terms of an overall, systematic and scientific “summing up” is considered hopeless, leaving behind an arbitrarily required yearning (*Sehnsucht*) for the transcendent, through various forms of feeling.

We might test this correlation of Hegel’s by applying it to a given society. If the correlation works, we should witness the following: the more a given culture treats objects of knowledge (and objectivity in general) as consumable, digestible “bits”, the more that culture will manifest expressions of sentimentality. But I am not a sociologist.

NOTES

¹ See, for example, Jeffrey Hoover, “The Origin of the Conflict Between Hegel and Schleiermacher at Berlin”, *Owl of Minerva*, 20, 1 (fall 1988) pp. 69-79.

2. Cf. *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 164 add.

3. *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 140 add.

4. I mean Hegel’s notion of science, as represented in the system of his *Encyclopedia*.

5. The first edition appeared in 1799. The second appeared in 1806.

6. *Werke in 20 Bänden*, ed. Moldenhauer and Michel, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1970, vol. 11, pp. 42-67. English translation by Eric Von Der Luft, *Hegel, Hinrichs and Schleiermacher on Feeling and Religion*, Lewiston, Mellen Press, 1987.

7. See Brecht and Sandberger, “Hegels Begegnung mit der Theologie im Tübinger Stift”, *Hegel-Studien*, vol. 5, 1969, pp. 47-81. Immanuel Carl Diez, *Briefwechsel und Kantische Schriften. Wissensbegründung in der Glaubenskrise Tübingen-Jena*, ed. D. Henrich (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1997).

8. *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 2, p.13.
9. In the first edition of his *Speeches on Religion*, Schleiermacher refers almost exclusively to the "universe" rather than to "God".
10. Hegel uses the expression in his Preface to Hinrichs' work on religion. In this preface, Hegel refers primarily to Schleiermacher's *Dogmatics (Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt)*, where he further develops his theory of religious feeling.
11. *Glauben und Wissen, Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 2, p.391.
12. *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 11, p.46.
13. Ibid p. 48
14. Ibid. It should be noted that these same words, grasped differently, i.e. speculatively, will form the objective truth of religious content within science. The linguistic dimension of objectivity will resurface in our discussion of various postmodern accounts, e.g. in Lyotard and Baudrillard.
15. Ibid
16. This is the "thoroughgoing skepticism" Hegel refers to in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*.
17. "Thus appearance is the phenomenon of skepticism, or again, the phenomenon of <subjective> idealism, an immediateness that is not something or a thing, absolutely not an independent being that would be outside its determination and its relation to the subject." *The Science of Logic*, "Doctrine of Essence", *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 6, p.19.
18. Ibid. p.50
19. Ibid., p.49.
20. Ibid., p.51.
21. Ibid. p.51.
22. Ibid
23. Ibid., p.52
24. Ibid
25. Ibid., p.54
26. Ibid., p.56
27. Jean-François Lyotard, *La Condition Postmoderne* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1979) pp.63-68.
28. Ibid. p.13.
29. An example can be found in the chapter on "Sense-certainty" of the *Phenomenology*, where Hegel describes the "wisdom" of animals regarding the essential nothingness of finite things of the senses. "Completely convinced of their nothingness, they simply gobble them up." *Werke in 20 Bänden* vol.3, p.61.
30. Jean Baudrillard, *La société de consommation* (Paris : Denoël/Folio, 1970), p.309.
31. Gilles Lipovetsky, *L'ère du vide* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), p. 16.
32. Ibid.
33. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p.133.
34. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, trans. anon.(New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p.317.
35. This is how Hegel defines romantic irony: an evacuation (*Vereitelung*, rendering vain) of true

objectivity. See Hegel's *Review* of Solger's works, *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 11, p.233. This postmodern assault on objectivity, through romantic irony is reflected in Carl Rapp's, *Fleeing the Universal – the Critique of Post-Rational Criticism*, Albany, SUNY, 1998. The view that Hegel's critique of Early German Romanticism can be understood as a critique of postmodernity should be distinguished from those that understand Hegel's political philosophy as a critique of *modernity*, i.e. of the pure Enlightenment view of the state and freedom. Cf. David Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity – Hegel, Heidegger and After*, University of Chicago Press, 1986 and Richard Dien Winfield, "Hegel, Romanticism and Modernity", *Owl of Minerva* 27, 1 (Fall 1995), pp.3-18.

36. This is the theme of Taylor's essay, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Concord, Ontario: Anansi Press, 1991). In his magisterial *Sources of the Self*, he refers to "two big constellations of ideas" that define our present condition. "[O]ne joins a lively sense of our powers of disengaged reason to an instrumental reading of nature; the other focuses on our powers of creative imagination and links these to a sense of nature as an inner moral source." (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.319.